

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 041525Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3033

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 0925

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, NG, OAU

SUBJ: NIGER POSITION ON WESTERN SAHARA

1. FORCEFULLY ENCORSING CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, GON IS IN EFFECT TAKING FENCE-SITTING POSTURE ON SAHARA, BALANCING ITS FEELING THAT ALGIERANS ARE PROBABLY BACKING THE RIGHT PRINCIPLE, WITH A DESIRE NOT TO ADD TO PROBLEMS OF A WEAK AND BELEAGUERED MAURITANIA, WHICH SEEN AS IN FAR OVER ITS HEAD ON SAHARA ISSUE.

2. RETURNING MARCH 2 FROM OUA MINISTERIAL MEETING IN ADDIS, FOREIGN MINISTER DJERMAKOYE CHARACTERIZED SESSION AS "STORMY" (HOULEUSE) AND DIFFICULT. EACH OF MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED, SAHARA, DJIBOUTI, AND COMORES, INVOLVES SAME ISSUE, DJERMAKOYE SAID -- THAT OF SELF-DETERMINATION. NIGER TOOK FIRM STAND SUPPORT PRINCIPAL THROUGHOUT OAU SESSION.

3. ON SAHARA, DJERMAKOYE CONTINUED, ALL DELEGATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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"EVEN MAURITANIA", ENDORSED SELF-DETERMINATION OF SAHARAN

PEOPLE. NARROWER ISSUE OF POLISARIO RECOGNITION, HOWEVER, WAS POINT OF SHARP DISAGREEMENT. QUOTE. MANY DELEGATIONS UNQUOTE WONDERED WHY RECOGNITION SHOULD BE ACCORDED NOW, WHEN, IN 13 YEARS SINCE OAU FOUNDING, IT HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN FIT EVEN TO ACCORD POLISARIO STATUS OF LIBERATION MOVEMENT. FOR ITS PART, NIGER WANTED TO BE "REALISTIC" AND LOOK AT PROBLEM AFTER PASSIONS OF MOMENT HAVE SUBSIDED. ACCORDINGLY, DJERMAKOYE SAID, HE WISHED FORMALLY TO DENY RUMORS AND STORIES THAT NIGER HAD TAKEN ANY PARTICULAR POSITION ON RECOGNITION ISSUE.

4. COMMENT: GON STRADDLING OF ISSUE REFLECTS ITS DISCOMFORT AT BEING CAUGHT IN MIDDLE BETWEEN ALGERAIN PRESSURE AND SAHELIAN TIES WITH MAURITANIA. AT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE MARCH 2 ON OTHER MATERS, HE RAISED SUBJECT SAYING HE WAS GREATLY TROUBLED BY THIS PROBLEM WHICH HE CONSIDERED THE MOST SERIOUS FACING AFRICA TODAY. LINES OF A SOLUTION IN ANGOLA WERE BECOMING EVIDENT. THERE WERE NO SUCH HOPES FOR WESTERN SAHARA WHERE BOTH SIDES WERE DUG IN. HE FELT PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT MAURITANIA WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS FALL GUY IN THIS CONFLICT. REALISTICALLY, ALL OF WESTERN SAHARA SHOULD GO TO MAURITANIA BECAUSE ITS PEOPLE WERE ESSENTIALLY MAURITANIAN AND IN FACT MOST OF POLISARIO LEADERS WERE MEMBERS OF PROMINENT MAURITANIAN FAMILIES. HOWEVER, WHEN MOROCCO AT TIME OF INDEPENDENCE WAIVED ITS CLAIMS TO MAURITANIA, LATTER BECAME INDEBTED TO IT AND IS NOW CAUGHT UP IN THE CONFLICT. I ASKED KOUNTCHE WHETHER THE ALGERIANS MIGHT RELENT. HIS ANSWER WAS -- NOT A CHANCE. IN CIRCUMSTANCES BEST POSITION NIGER COULD TAKE WAS TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, OPPOSE RECOGNITION OF POLISARIO AS LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND EXPRESS SYMPATHY FOR MAURITANIA'S POSITION.HECK

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